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BOOK REVIEWS

NEW FRENCH TEXT BOOKS

We have come to have a well-grounded suspicion of ponderous quarto treatises, simplifying the French verb for youthful readers, so we took up *The French Verb Newly Treated*, by A. Esclançon (Macmillan, \$1.25), with no great enthusiasm. We are the more glad to say that the work has merits that will recommend it to teachers of French. The diagrammatic treatment of the verb far surpasses in simplicity and completeness anything of which we know. Most teachers will be glad to give this scheme to their scholars. Each verb has its idiomatic and unusual uses lucidly explained on its own particular page, where more is given than can be easily found outside of Littré, and of course nothing can be found easily inside that monumental work. Teachers of French, we are sure, will find this work suggestive and helpful, and, properly treated, really tending towards simplification, spite of its 200 pages.

The Contemporary French Writers, by Mlle. Rosine Mellé (Ginn), purports, in a space of 174 pages, to give biographical sketches of no less than twenty-five writers, with selections illustrative of their several styles, the selections having the greater amount of space. The purpose of the work is most commendable ; but to state the plan is also to state the criticism. The ordinary class, and even quite an extraordinary class, would be sure to find it scrappy.

Morceaux Choisis D'Alphonse Daudet, edited by Frank W. Freeborn (Ginn) is just the opposite sort from the above, and a better sort we think it. The first third of the book is given over to the immortal and inimitable Tartarin, for whose acquaintance the young men and maidens who are given this book as a text will be forever grateful. The other selections are good, the final forty pages being given to *La Belle Nivernaise*. The notes are serviceable. Needless to say the text is not suitable for beginners. It is not simplified. But students who have gotten facility in easy reading could hardly have anything better.

A new reader for beginners need not necessarily be superior to those already in the field to gain a constituency. Teachers

who are contented to go over the same simple pieces for many successive years are getting rarer. The species will not soon disappear utterly, perhaps, but there are grounds to hope that ere too long it will pass into the realm of pedagogical paleontology. These reflections are suggested by *An Introduction to French Authors*, by Alphonse N. Van Daell. (Ginn.) The editor is a most accomplished teacher of modern languages, with a rich experience to qualify him for his work. The book has two parts, the first in plan not much unlike other readers, though none of the old favorites are there; the second devoted to the geography, history, and government of France. The author says, "many young students must believe that the only books worth reading in French are novels and plays," and is "convinced that it is far better to awaken their dormant curiosity for history, for all the higher forms of French literature." Better than what? The aim of teaching French must remain in our secondary schools to impart a useful reading knowledge, and the best way yet discovered to this end is much reading. It may be heresy, but it seems truth, that young students will read more of what interests them than of what is directed towards arousing a dormant curiosity. Pedagogically and personally we prefer a live interest to anything dormant whatever. And we therefore fear that Professor Van Daell's very excellent second part may not be so useful as he fondly hopes.

Another work from the same editor, but of quite a different kind, is *Extraits Choisis des Oeuvres de Paul Bourget*, also published by Ginn & Co. The book is intended for advanced classes, and the notes are few. M. Bourget has contributed an autobiographical introduction, in which he explains and analyses himself on scientific principles.

The new edition of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*, edited by Professor George McLean Harper (Henry Holt & Co.), seems to be in no way superior to others already available, while the printing of the French text is distinctly bad. The series of selections from modern French authors, edited by Professor E. H. Magill, of Swarthmore College (Chris. Sower Co., Philadelphia), has distinctly good features. The editor says (preface to vol. 1): "It should never be forgotten that intelligent and fluent translation, or understanding the text without translation, is the great object of this study (*i. e.* of French), and that it is not a wise expenditure of time to attempt to impart a writing and speaking knowledge of French in school and

college." Not all agree with this view, but many do, and for the latter these books are good. The notes are fairly copious. Vol. I. is devoted to Francisque Sarcey, Vol. II. to Madame De Witt (*nee* Guizot), Vol. III. to Anatole France, who is represented "by *La Fille de Clementine, ou Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*." These volumes contain nothing that is dull. *An Academic French Course* by A. Muzzarelli (Am. Book Co.), is the latest candidate for favor in the way of a beginner's book. The author's name does not prepare us for his declaration of faith that "An experience of fifteen years in teaching of modern languages has convinced him that the much-vaunted natural method is totally inapplicable in schools," but the declaration will meet with wide agreement. The work is attractively gotten up, and has merits that will doubtless win for it a good share of public favor. Anthologies are doubtless indispensable, therefore let us be grateful for so good a one as the select specimens of the Great French Writers in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, by G. Eugene Fastnacht. (Macmillan & Co.) The authors chosen are those "who tower head and shoulders above their contemporaries," while the most eminent French critics have been called upon for estimates of the authors, which estimates form by no means the least valuable part of the volume. The classical period has the more attention by far. For very advanced students, especially for teachers, this work will be most serviceable.

In concluding this notice, which covers, and can cover, only a portion of the works that have recently appeared in this field, we are impressed with the fact that the teacher of French now has an embarrassment of riches. He is in many respects most favored among his kind, for it is possible now, as it was not at a time within the memory of man, to have a new text which shall interest and stimulate him for almost every class. Dull repetition is henceforth inexcusable.

C. H. Thurber

The History of the English Language. By OLIVER FARRAR EMERSON, A. M., Ph. D., Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and English Philology in Cornell University. Pp. 415. New York and London: Macmillan & Co., 1894.

The need of a new manual of the history of our language may not be apparent; but that Professor Emerson's book is timely the first glance suffices to show. The table of contents indi-